Innovative summer camp aims to change math mindset

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The Laboratory's Math and Science Academy (MSA) hosted a pilot four-week summer camp June 3-27 designed to support mathematics understanding for Pojoaque Valley School District (PVSD) students who will be entering sixth to eighth grade in the fall.

The free camp combined innovative approaches to developing students' mathematical practices and growth mindset with activities such as golf instruction and 3-D printing opportunities.

More than 50 students took part, and the camp also provided an opportunity for teacher professional development with three PVDS teachers co-teaching the course, which was designed and led by two of the Lab's MSA staff.

Stanford University Involvement

The math instruction was following a curriculum developed by Jo Boaler of Stanford University that has demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement and student attitudes toward mathematics.

The Youcubed program bases its engaging classroom activities on current research into math learning and brain science. The camp in Pojoaque is one of several research sites, helping Stanford study the outcomes of the curriculum and camp for students and teachers.

Students combined their math studies with golf instruction.

First Tee Golf

Students also engaged in a structured athletics program each day, run by Juan Mitchell, executive director of the nonprofit First Tee of Central New Mexico, which works to make golf more accessible to any child interested in learning the game and its values. The Towa Golf Club at Buffalo Thunder provided the students free use of their facilities.

"It was rewarding to work collaboratively with the PVSD teachers to plan and facilitate the camp and watch it be successful," says Randy Merker, one of the MSA's education specialists. "It's great to see students being successful with math in a way they have not previously experienced."